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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PASS TO AMCONSUL RECIFE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/08

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SUBJECT: Despite Implementation of New TSA Regulations, Ongoing Security Concerns at Venezuelan Airports

REF: 09 CARACAS 269; 08 CARACAS 1513; 08 CARACAS 1364

CLASSIFIED BY: Steuart, Darnall, Economic Counselor, DOS, ECON;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶11. (C) Summary: On January 4, Post contacted both U.S. and domestic carriers to ensure compliance with the new TSA security directive. Given the inability of TSA to certify Venezuelan airports, airlines have already imposed heightened security measures. Contacts in the aviation industry, though, continue to be concerned over security vulnerabilities at Maiquetia, the only international airport serving Caracas.

Civil Aviation Authorities and Airline Response

¶12. (SBU) There are six airlines with direct flights to the United States from Venezuela: American Airlines (flies 45 times a week), Delta (flies 7 times a week), Continental (flies 7 times a week), Santa Barbara (flies 14 times a week), Avior (flies 3 times a week), and LAN (flies twice a week). Airlines flying direct to the United States have already implemented extra security precautions at the boarding gate, including repeated screening of carry-on bags and passengers and crew. Airline managers told Econoff that airlines flying to the U.S. were implementing security measures to comply with the new TSA regulations. Post has spoken with each of the U.S. carriers to ensure the new measures are in effect.

Possible Security Concerns

¶13. (C) In a January 7 meeting with Econoff, Venezuelan Airline Chamber president William Bracho (protect) expressed concerns over security gaps at Maiquetia airport. Bracho confirmed that airlines are implementing the new TSA security measures. He claimed, however, that while the international terminal's security is satisfactory, the domestic terminal does not have scanners for checked baggage. Bracho said that, in a couple of reported incidents, fireworks were found in checked luggage. His concern is that a bag could be transferred into the international terminal through the uncheck domestic terminal. On another occasion, Marisela de Loaiza (protect), Country Manager for the International Air Transport Association, told Econoffs that she and a colleague were able to pass uncheck through a hallway into a sterile area of the airport. Previous concerns by Venezuelan airlines regarding security have also been documented (reftel B).

Comment

¶6. (C) Notwithstanding some areas of concern, U.S. and other airlines have confirmed that they are implementing the new TSA security directive for flights bound for the U.S.
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